

BRIEFLY

Ukrainians prefer independence: Voters in the Ukrainian capital Kiev have backed independence from the Soviet Union by a margin of around 90 per cent, election officials said Monday, reports AP from Kiev.

They also told Reuter preliminary results from the city and the Kiev province from Sunday's voting showed more than 50 per cent chose Parliamentary Chairman Leonid Kravchuk out of six candidates for president.

The results, if confirmed officially, would give Kravchuk a strong chance of winning on the first ballot and avoiding a runoff in two weeks time.

Full national results from the independence referendum and election are expected later on Monday.

Pindi rules out threat from Delhi: Pakistan Chief of the Army Staff Asif Nawaz has said that there is no immediate threat from India to Pakistan, reports Xinhua Monday from Islamabad.

Talking to local defence correspondents on Saturday during his inspection of the winter exercises of Pakistan Army, he said that there is nothing extraordinary on the borders between Pakistan and India.

According to local press, the Army chief said under a recent agreement, the Directors General of Military Operations of India and Pakistan stayed in touch regularly to keep each other informed of their troop movements and military exercises in their respective areas.

Hun Sen arrives in Thailand: Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen arrived in Thailand Monday to attend a meeting of the Supreme National Council (SNC), Thai navy officials said, reports AFP Monday from Bangkok.

Hun Sen arrived at the southeastern air base of Sattahip aboard a special flight, the officials said.

They said the Prime Minister would travel directly to the nearby resort of Pattaya to attend the meeting of the SNC, a reconciliation body formed under the terms of a UN-brokered peace treaty with representatives of all rival Cambodian factions.

The meeting, due to open Tuesday, is to focus on guarantees for the safety of Khmer Rouge SNC representatives in the Cambodian capital.

Atlantis lands on a desert: The space shuttle Atlantis landed on a desert lakebed on Sunday after being forced to cut its mission short by three days because of the failure of a key navigational unit, reports Reuter Monday from California.

The six astronauts, who had released a spy satellite to spot missile launchings, were to have landed at Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on Wednesday after a 10-day mission, but came down at Edwards Air Base on Sunday because it has longer runways.

Trade embargo against Haiti: Foreign ministers of the RIO group of Latin American and Caribbean countries recommended on Sunday that their presidents enforce a trade embargo against Haiti's military-backed government, reports Reuter Monday from Colombia.

"We decided to recommend to the presidents that the embargo must be strictly applied", Uruguay's Foreign Minister Hector Gross Espinell told reporters.

Foreign ministers from 13 Latin American and Caribbean nations that make up the RIO group spent the weekend discussing how to increase pressure on the de facto government, which ousted Haiti's elected President Jena-Bertrand Aristide in a September 30 military coup.

Blást kills 3 cops in UP: At least three policemen were killed when a land-mine planted by suspected Sikh militants blew up their truck in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, the United News of India (UNI) reported, reports Reuter Monday from New Delhi.

UNI quoted police as saying that militants also fired at the truck as it hit the mine in the Hajira area. Police believe the mine was set off by remote control, UNI said. Sikh militants fighting for a separate homeland in the northern state of Punjab have extended their activities to the forests in adjoining Uttar Pradesh, where many Sikhs have settled as farmers.

Nepali civil servants, troops quit jobs in Bhutan

THIMPHU, Bhutan, Dec 2: After three years of trying to put down a revolt in its Nepalese minority, this remote Himalayan kingdom faces a potentially more serious threat: the flight of essential Nepalese functionaries, reports AP.

Increasing numbers of civil servants, soldiers and policemen are leaving, and government officials say several leading technocrats have been among them.

"It is very unfortunate, because nobody has forced them to quit," said Dago Tshering, the Home Minister.

Most Cabinet posts are held by the indigenous Drukpas represented by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, but managerial jobs often go to Nepalese who studied in the United States on scholarships from foreign foundations and the Bhutanese government.

Nepalese who have fled accuse Bhutan of discrimination and atrocities, Government officials reply that some of those leaving are accused of taking kickbacks on contracts and export deals.

Khandu Wangchuk, secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission, said 354 Nepalese civil servants, 73 soldiers, 26 policemen and 26 forest guards had "absconded from the country" since May.

"The desertions have caused much embarrassment to the royal government, and we in the civil service are under great pressure to stop appointing South Bhutanese people in high and sensitive posts," he said.

The government, in its campaign to project national unity, uses the term "South Bhutanese" for the Nepali-speaking people who live along the Indian border. The Drukpas are called "North Bhutanese."

Wangchuk, whose name is common among Drukpas, said 45 per cent of Bhutan's 12,023 civil servants were ethnic Nepalese from the five southern districts that border India.

Until waves of migration began three decades ago, there were few Nepalese in this Buddhist Kingdom, known in ancient times as Druk Yul, land of the Thunder Dragon.

Nepalese activists, who say they are waging a pro-democracy campaign against an absolute monarchy, claim 53 per cent of Bhutan's people are Nepalese. The government says the true proportion is barely one-third, and that many of those are illegal aliens.

The latest major desertion occurred in October, when a six-member delegation did not return from Nepal. One of the six was N.S. Dhakal, 35, a leading economist in the Trade and Industry Ministry.

In an interview in Katmandu, capital of Nepal, Dhakal said he could no longer tolerate a government that tried to "legalize barbaric atrocities."

Dhakal, who holds a doctorate from the University of Colorado, is one of at least 6,000 Nepalese from Bhutan who have found refuge in Nepal.

A finger of India 50 miles wide separates Nepal and Bhutan. Nepali-speaking people, most of them Hindus, live in a swath stretching across all three countries.

Two top civil servants who started the exodus in May also have found refuge in Nepal: R B Basnet, head of the State Trading Corp. of Bhutan, and Bhim Subba, director of the Power Department.

"We will return home as soon as democracy prevails there," Basnet, 41, said in an interview.

He said the Drukpas "declared ethnic Nepalese to be immigrants and started to evict them."

"We waited with patience for reason to prevail," he said. "Instead, the crackdown started. Schools were closed and converted into barracks and jails in south Bhutan. Some of the villages were razed to the ground. Bhutanese soldiers carried out gang rapes and tortured the people."

When they did not return to Thimphu, said Basnet and Subba, a 39-year-old graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, the Bhutanese government charged them with embezzling \$3 million. They deny the charge.

Bhutan claims it is the Nepalese militants who commit atrocities.

A government report called "Anti-national Activities in Southern Bhutan - A Terrorist Movement" contains 22 colour photographs of dead or wounded people. They depict beheadings, chopped-off fingers and disembowlements, most of which appear to have been done with knives.

Officials accuse Nepalese militants of killing at least 33 people and kidnapping at least 174 since the revolt began in early 1988.

The onset of violence coincided with a census the Nepalese say was aimed at expelling them or denying citizenship. The government contends up to 100,000 Nepalese have immigrated illegally to escape poverty and overcrowding in India.

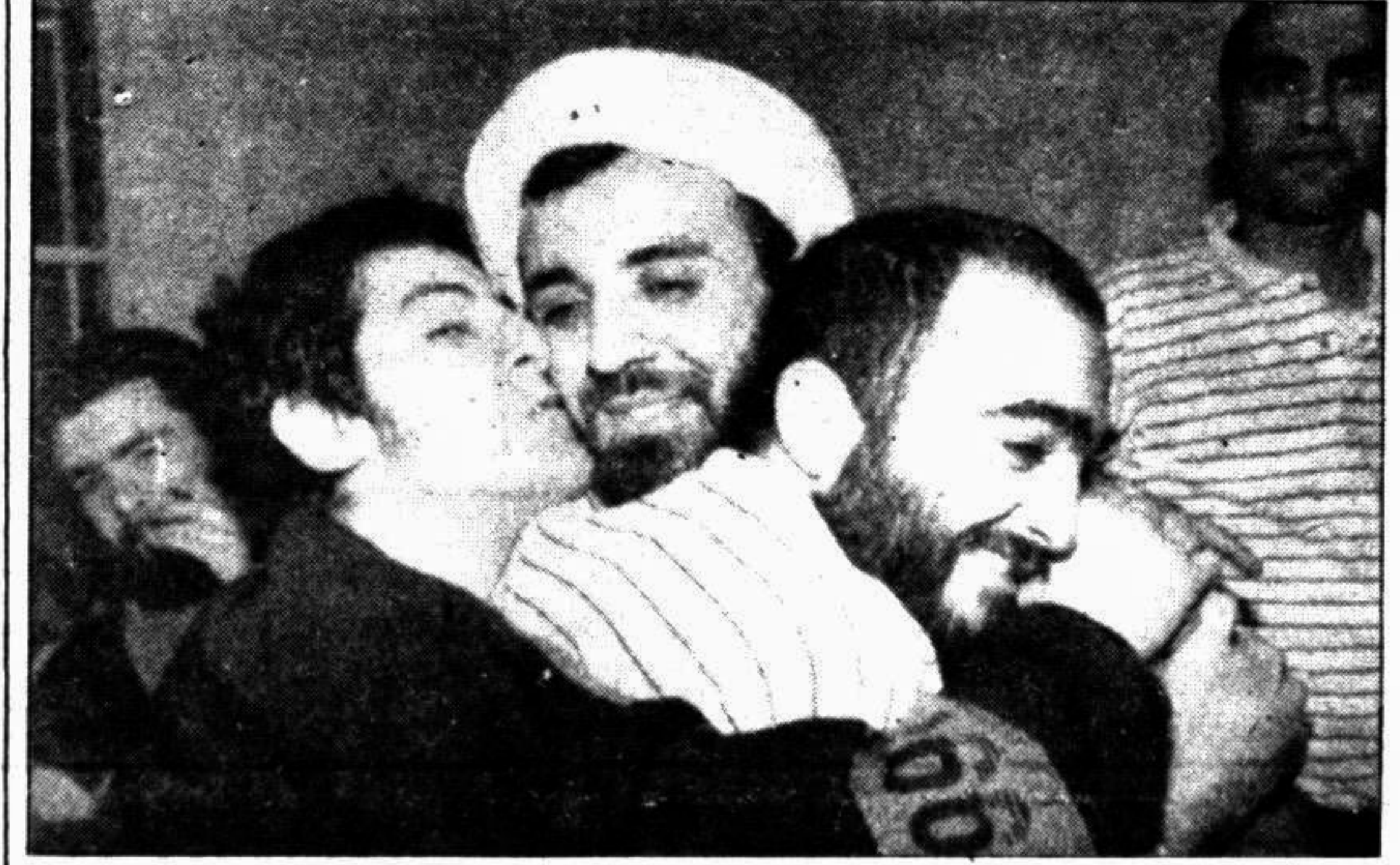
According to the World Bank and other international agencies, Bhutan's per capita annual income is about \$180, compared to \$340 for India. A Bhutanese diplomat in New Delhi said, however, that living costs are lower in his country and claimed the per capita income had increased to \$425.

Bhutan's population figures also are in question. The government says the number is 600,000, and some Nepalese activists agree, but foreign estimates range from 1.2 million to 1.5 million.

Overjoyed over freedom



LOVELAND, Colorado: Freed hostage Thomas Sutherland celebrates on arrival with his family. Sutherland will attend a welcome celebration in Ft. Collins. Sutherland spent 5 years in captivity in Beirut. —AFP/UNB photo



SIDON: One of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah leaders, Sheikh Nabil Khawouk (C) embraces Sunday two Arab prisoners released from the prison of Khiam in Israel's security zone in South Lebanon at the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross. —AFP/UNB photo

Bush offers no apology for bombing of Hiroshima, Nagasaki

WASHINGTON, Dec 2: President George Bush on Sunday ruled out any apology to Japan for the World War Two atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, saying it saved countless American lives, possibly even his own, reports Reuter.

The United States on December 7 will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour that propelled America into the war, and the two countries are doing much soul-searching in connection with the event.

There have been some suggestions in America that Japan owes the United States an apology for Pearl Harbour and that a good time to do it would be at the 50th anniversary ceremonies in Hawaii, which Bush is to lead.

Bush, who was shot down by the Japanese while piloting a navy avenger torpedo bomber in the Pacific, reacted strongly when told by a television interviewer, that some of the Japanese leadership wanted the United States to apologise.

For what? Bush responded in any icy tone, told it was for the August 6, 1945 destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki three days later, Bush said.

Not that this President, I was fighting over there. I had my orders to go back there, when the war ended and American lives were saved.

Now do we mourn the loss of innocent civilians? Yes. Can I empathise with a family whose child is victimised by these attacks? Absolutely. But I can also empathise with my roommate's mother, my roommate having been killed in action," he said in the taped interview broadcast on ABC's this week with David Brinkley programme.

Harbour observance and Bush offered a candid testimony of what the war was like for him saying he once

watched a fellow airman cut in half by their plane's propeller.

Bush himself was shot down during a combat mission at a Pacific island and was rescued by submarine after spending two hours in the ocean, in all likelihood he will be the last President who served in World War Two.

The President said it was "rank revisionism" to suggest the United States owed an apology to Japan and recalled the dilemma Harry Truman faced when he was suddenly catapulted into the presidency on the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and was told of the secret atomic bomb project.

We made a tough, calculating decision, and it was right, because it spared the lives of millions of American citizens. And we were at war, having been attacked, he said.

And so what we have tried to do and what we should continue to try to do is heal any wounds and express our proper concern and sympathy for the victims of war wherever they shall be.

But he added firmly no apology will be required. And it will not be asked of this President.

Bush 67 said he believed Japan is appreciative of the post war US effort to help restore that country and that the two countries are friends despite trade frictions that have led to an upsurge of Japan - bashing in America and anti-Americanism in Japan.

If you see some ugliness in our country about the Japanese I'll be out front saying, hey, knock that off, as we used to say in the navy. It's not the way you build relationships in the United States, he said.

Bush said a lesson from the war is not to "suck yourself into some splendid isolation and turn your back on the rest of the world."

Seven prisoners escape in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 2: Three hundred police with tracker dogs are hunting seven prisoners, including four Indonesians serving life sentences for firearms offences, who broke out of a jail near Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The prisons department deputy director general, Mohammad Nadzri Mohamad Khusairi, said preliminary investigations showed no involvement of prison officials in the jailbreak.

Six killed in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 2: A grenade exploded at a party in the black township of Soweto, killing one man, and five more people died in political violence elsewhere, police said Monday, reports AP.

Police Lt Col Tienie Halgryn said someone hurled a grenade into the party late Sunday. Eight people were injured, in addition to the man who was killed.

Off the Record

Fire alarm in Reagan's house

LOS ANGELES: A false alarm brought firefighters to the suburban Los Angeles home of former President Reagan on Sunday. No fire was found and officials do not know who placed the call, reports AP.

Four fire companies rolled to the ex-president's home in the pricey neighbourhood of Bel-Air near Beverly Hills, said Fire Department spokesman Michael Little.

Little said he was uncertain whether anyone was home at the time of the afternoon emergency call. A telephone message left at Reagan's office was not immediately returned.

A miracle indeed

SEATTLE: Forgive Annie and John Galgano if they're a bit more indulgent than most first-time parents. Their child, Kayla Marie Galgano, born seven weeks ago, is a miracle that even has the doctors stunned, reports AP.

In a fight against leukemia 10 years ago, her mother was bombarded by high doses of radiation and chemicals in preparation for a bone-marrow transplant. Doctors warned Annie the treatment would leave her sterile.

By delivering Kayla, Annie, 31, joined an estimated 10 women in the world who have had babies after such intense treatment, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Centre said.

Kayla, born eight weeks premature but healthy, came home this week in time for Thanksgiving, the US holiday held last Thursday.

"She's just a doll," said John, also 31. "For all the worries we've been through, she's just, oh, just a treasure to us — even if she keeps us up all night."

Nine months ago, Annie's fortunes didn't seem so bright. She was suffering from nausea, fatigue and a cold that wouldn't go away — all symptoms of leukemia. She feared a relapse. She didn't dare consult a doctor.

One day, she blurted to John, "If I didn't know better, I would say I have all the symptoms of being pregnant."

Impossible, they told each other.

Annie took a home pregnancy test, and the result was positive. But still unbelieving, she went to her physician, who confirmed what Annie had hoped but dared not believe: She was three months pregnant.

"I just fell apart. I was sobbing," she recalled.

Only 64 women who have received bone-marrow transplants are known to have given birth, according to BMT Newsletter, a monthly publication on bone-marrow transplants. Even rarer are births by women who have received "total body radiation," as did Annie.

In the cancer treatment, radiation and chemotherapy are used to kill the body's bone-marrow, which produces blood cells, before healthy marrow is transplanted from a donor. Reproductive organs can be damaged by the process.

Santa Claus runs out of candy

KAIKOHE: So much for the Christmas spirit.

Santa Claus, alias John Field, was passing out candy during the annual parade marking the start of the Christmas season Saturday when he ran out of candy and balloons in the small town of Kaikohe on New Zealand's North Island, reports AP.

The children turned nasty and began swearing and kicking at Field. He said some adults also became rude and aggressive, asking sarcastically, "Is this another government (budget) cut?"

Field said he was amazed and saddened by the reaction, which he believed was a product of hard times, especially among welfare beneficiaries.

A test-tube baby at last

ATHENS: A 54-year-old Greek gave birth to a healthy child after trying to have a test-tube baby for 20 years. Her doctor announced here Monday, reports AP.

Anna Harak tried for 20 years to have a child with the in vitro method, but without success until Saturday.

Given the age of the mother it is a world first in terms of invitro fertilisation, her doctor said.

Hun Sen okays UN protection of Khmer Rouge leaders

PATTAYA, Thailand, Dec 2: Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen today gave the green light here to United Nations protection of Khmer Rouge representatives in Phnom Penh where they were attacked last week by an angry lynch mob, reports AP.

But at the same time he told reporters on arriving here for a meeting of Cambodia's Supreme National Council (SNC) that he doubted that the UN would accept that task, as demanded by the Khmer Rouge.

The Phnom Penh headquarters of Khieu Samphan and Son Sen, the Khmer Rouge representatives on the SNC, were ransacked on Wednesday and the two forced to flee to Thailand after thousands of demonstrators attacked them in retaliation for Khmer Rouge atrocities when the ultra-Marxist group ruled Cambodia between 1975 and 1979.

It was the first major incident since the October signing of the peace treaty between Phnom Penh and a guerrilla coalition dominated by the Khmer Rouge.

Khieu Samphan and Son Sen had returned to Phnom Penh from exile to take part in a meeting of the SNC, a reconciliation body which, under the terms of the United Nations-brokered Paris accord, is to be headquartered in Phnom Penh.

The Cambodian government has since pledged to ensure the safety of the Khmer Rouge delegation in the Cambodian capital, but the faction has demanded that UN troops sent to Cambodia to guarantee peace in the war-ravaged country be involved in their protection.

"If any one country... offers to provide protection to the Khmer Rouge, I will say, OK," Hun Sen said today.

"There is nothing more difficult than to provide protection for the Khmer Rouge," he added. "I believe that the United Nations would not like to take up this task."

UN bureaucracy to be overhauled

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 2: Incoming Secretary-General Butros Ghali has a better chance to streamline the UN's sprawling bureaucracy than any of his predecessors ever had, reports AP.

Since its creation in 1945, the UN Secretariat and its agencies have sprouted new layers of bureaucracy willy-nilly to meet new demands and emergencies and an ever-expanding mandate.

Finally, UN member-states seem to agree the time is right for meaningful reform — not so much cutting back the world body as reorganizing it to meet the needs of the 21st century.

Ghali, who takes the oath of office Tuesday, had to agree to support reform when he campaigned for his new post, particularly in his meetings with major Western powers, UN officials and diplomats said privately.

"I'm quite certain that before he got the nod from some of the major powers, they consulted with him on this question," said UN expert Ed Luck, president of the UN Association of the USA, a private group that studies multi-lateral diplomacy.

"It's not that the bureaucracy is overblown so much, but that it is misproportioned and top-heavy," Luck said.

For instance, 34 UN agencies and about a dozen under-secretaries-general report directly to the UN chief, in addition to the stream of ambassadors, foreign ministers and other official visitors seeking audience.

"I don't understand how this dentist-office procedure didn't kill Javier Perez de Cuellar," the outgoing secretary-general, said Brian Urquhart, a retired top UN official who has worked for all UN chiefs. "He had people lined up in his waiting room

on a 15-minute appointment schedule."

"It is clear that no individual can exercise effective supervision of the 30 or 40 officials who on the present organization chart are expected to report to him," said a memo by UN ambassadors advocating reorganization.

They proposed the creation of four new departments to take the burden off the UN chief, headed by deputy secretaries-general who would deal with most matters. The proposed new divisions are:

Political and Security Affairs; Development, Economic and Environmental Affairs; Social, Human Rights and Secretariat Services; and Management, Finance and Secretariat Services.

According to Luck, the key question now is, "Does Ghali really have the firm backing of the member-states for reform? Otherwise coalitions form between various bureaucratic entities in the organization and member-states from the outside."

"Together they can work to manipulate the budget, to freeze positions, to force down the secretary-general's throat certain appointments to cer-

tain slots, and to thwart his efforts to create a truly international civil service," Luck said.

Ghali's lack of experience in management is not a problem, Luck said. As secretary-general, he can concentrate on major diplomatic and political affairs, and an experienced manager could take over the Management portfolio.

In addition, the 60-year-old Ghali's declared intention to serve only one five-year term would free him from the political pressures and compromises forced on UN chiefs who seek reappointment.

"If he's serious about serving only one term, that gives him more flexibility," Luck said.

Under the proposed reforms, the posts of assistant secretaries-general would be dissolved when their contracts run out (most of them expire in 1992)

Bomb-making equipment in Iraqi sugar factory

MANAMA, Bahrain, Dec 2: UN inspectors returning from Iraq said on Sunday they found chemical bomb-making equipment in a surprise visit to a sugar factory and undeclared scud missile "cradles" at an ammunition storage site, reports Reuter.

Karen Jansen, head of a team of chemical and biological arms experts, told reporters previous UN inspectors had found the bomb-making equipment was moved from Iraq's main chemical facility at Muthana, north of Baghdad, before the Gulf war.

Iraqi authorities were asked to return the equipment from its hiding place at a sugar factory in the northern Iraqi town of Mosul, to Muthana, since chosen as the site for the destruction of Baghdad's chemical arsenal.

"Iraq told UN inspectors the material, which had been used to make chemical bombs, had all been returned, verifying this was part of the 18-member team's mission", she said.

"There were well over 100 pieces of equipment that were still remaining at Mosul. Some of it may have been general purpose... but a number of items, roughly half, were clearly bomb-making pieces of machinery — drills and presses," she said.

"To me it looks like an attempt to keep a lot of equipment they knew would be destroyed."

Jansen was speaking in Bahrain, the field headquarters for all UN inspection teams, on return from a 12-day trip to Iraq.

She said the team made unannounced visits to 16 suspected weapons production sites spread over the entire country.



Ghali